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Engaged Black Bear Digital Badging Initiative

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Engaged Black Bear Digital Badges

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What is the Engaged Black Bear Initiative?

The Engaged Black Bear (EBB) is an innovative digital badging initiative, created to aid the University of Maine in meeting its vision to become the “most distinctively student-centered and community engaged of all the American Research Universities.”

EBB Learning Pathway [digital badges](#) were created to engage undergraduate students at three levels — taking them from a participant to leader within a chosen area of interest. Pathways include important societal issues such as: Global Perspectives, Service to Community and Environmental Stewardship. Badges are awarded to students who meet the defined criteria and provide evidence of their experiences, extending their learning beyond the classroom.

What are the benefits of participating in the EBB Initiative?

- A UMaine-verified record of engagement experiences not found on transcripts.
- Recognition of their engagement experiences, outside of the classroom setting.
- A way to enhance their digital identity by sharing successes on social media sites, such as LinkedIn.
- Access to a lasting evidence-based repository of student work that can easily be located and viewed long after graduation.
- Peer recognition and a showcase of student achievements through the Credly badging platform

- Peer recognition and a showcase of student achievements through the Credly badging platform.
- A competitive edge when seeking internship, employment, and other opportunities.
- An opportunity for recognition as an Engaged Black Bear Award recipient at graduation.

What is a digital badge?

A digital badge is an innovative tool for capturing and validating a personalized set of accomplishments. Badges contain information about these experiences, including the criteria for earning the badge and the actual evidence provided by the earner (e.g., papers, videos and weblinks). Earned badges can be shared on social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

EBB badges are recognized by the University of Maine as an important credential, representing undergraduate student accomplishments and active engagement. These badges capture, recognize and promote student engagement, on campus and in the community.

What is unique about Engaged Black Bear digital badge?

UMaine digital badges provide verified recognition of engagement experiences and accomplishments not represented on transcripts. These badges help students progress through levels of achievement, giving them an edge in seeking employment after graduation. Stakeholders will be able to see a student's progression from participant to leader through time. Stakeholders will know the extent to which a participant took the initiative to become involved on campus and in the community.

Badges are aligned with American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) learning outcomes for added value and assessment. The EBB model integrated student initiative, independence, and reflection into its design. The initiative aims to foster a culture of community engagement, civic action, and lifelong learning.

Why should I earn badges?

- EBB Badges can validate core employability skills such as leadership.
- Sharing your badges will help you expand your digital network and make connections. According to a LinkedIn study, profiles with certifications and badges receive six times the number of profile views.
- Your best papers and other evidence (e.g., videos, certificates, weblinks, e-portfolios) can be stored within the badge and will only be a click away.
- Employers and other stakeholders will have easy access to your badges and your evidence, helping you to differentiate yourself from others in the job market.
- Badges provide detailed and UMaine-verified evidence of your accomplishments, not found on your resume or transcript.
- Access to a lasting evidence-based repository of student work that can easily be located and viewed long after graduation.
- Provides well-deserved recognition, including the opportunity to be considered for the prestigious Engaged Black Bear Award award at graduation.

How does it work?

Undergraduate students can earn UMaine digital badges that recognize their accomplishments and engagement experiences, on and off campus.

Students are guided through a series of opportunities, within a learning pathway, that take them from participants to active leaders. A student can earn three badges (Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3) within each pathway. In order to earn a badge, a student must submit evidence that demonstrates that they have met the [criteria for earning that badge](#).

Students take the initiative by uploading evidence into the Credly digital badging platform (Levels 2 and 3). All evidence is verified by a faculty or staff member before a badge is issued. Critical reflection is integrated within the criteria for each badge level.

It is expected that students continue to earn badges throughout their time at UMaine. The culminating Learning pathway badge (meta-badge) "stacks" all three levels into one badge, providing an easy way to organize and share multiple achievements earned over time.

Badges can be shared on social network sites like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, providing access to a student's verified accomplishments and embedded evidence. Students who continue to be engaged and meet the criteria may also receive the Engaged Black Bear Award at graduation.

The Engaged Black Bear badging model relies on student commitment, reflection and initiative to meet its goals. The initiative aims to foster a culture of community engagement, civic action and lifelong learning.

What is a Learning Pathway and how do I complete one?

[Learning Pathways](#) allow the student to choose the route they wish to take toward increased engagement and leadership development in a defined area of interest.

UMaine offers learning pathways in such interest areas as: Global Perspectives, Service to Community, Environmental Stewardship, Health and Community, 4-H STEM Ambassadors, Peer Tutor, Informational Literacy, Flagship Internship, and Undergraduate Research Scholar.

Students will earn a badge for each Level that reflects interest in a new area (Level 1), sustained involvement in the chosen path (Level 2), and leadership in the field or mastery of skill sets (Level 3).

The expectation is that the three level badges are earned over the course of three semesters (i.e., one level per semester). The meta-badge will likely take an additional (fourth) semester of engagement. Students may earn more than one badge in a semester, as long as the badges are in different learning pathways.

[Learn more about each Learning Pathway category and its criteria here.](#)

If you have an idea on the development of a new learning pathway please contact Claire Sullivan at claires@maine.edu.

What are the requirements for completing a level?

Each learning pathway follows a similar framework with some variations depending on the badge experiences and goals set by the badge developers.

In general, a Level 1 badge involves attending three events that align with the chosen learning activities lists. Students may also go through a process to have additional events/activities approved. Students will submit a reflection paper after attending the three events. A template is provided to aid students in completing the badge criteria.

A Level 2 badge is earned when a student has shown a sustained commitment within the chosen learning pathway. The requirements will vary based on the criteria determined by the badge developer but will include such activities as becoming an active member and/or active volunteer of a club, organization or program as well as working on an applied project that aligns with the interests of the learning pathway. Reflection is part of the evidence that is submitted.

The Level 3 badge completes the learning pathway when the student has maintained a long-standing, active membership with a club, organization or program, becomes a leader in the organization, and completes an engaged project. Students reflect on their experiences and submit further evidence of their accomplishments.

Evidence is submitted to the badge developer and verified (Level 1) or verified and then uploaded into Credly, the digital badge host site, (Level 2, Level 3 and meta-badge) by the student. Required evidence is defined by the badge developers and approved for each Learning Pathway badge.

What if I don't see a Learning Pathway that fits my interests?

Students that do not see a Learning Pathway that represents their interests or Faculty and Staff members who have an idea on the development of a new learning pathway may contact Claire Sullivan at claires@maine.edu.

What is Credly?

UMaine EBB digital badges are hosted by Credly

[Credly](#) is a leading, secure platform for earning, sharing, and displaying digital badges. Your digital badge is awarded to the @maine.edu email address you use when you create your Credly account. Each earned badge has a unique URL and cannot be copied. Badges issued and received on Credly.com are fully compliant with the Mozilla Open Badges (OBI) infrastructure, a universal framework for badges. EBB badge earners can use the Credly profile to organize and display their collections of badges and import badges earned elsewhere. Badges can also be sent to the Mozilla Open Badge Backpack. Earners can also link badges earned through outside organizations within UMaine's learning pathway meta-badges as part of their evidence. This will allow for further documentation of earners' experiences, skills, and accomplishments. It is important to note that the earner is in control of what they share. You can read more about Credly's privacy policy at credly.com/privacy.

Where can I get a professional photo taken for my Credly profile?

In addition to being a great resource for 'Exploring, Experiencing, Developing and Achieving Career Goals', the [UMaine Career Center](#) can assist you with having a professional photo taken for your Credly profile.

Other Pathways

[Click here for UMaine-related pathways.](#)

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